

NOTES FOR ESTABLISHMENT BRIEFING II - 25 March 1968

I. Back to 1st principles:

- (a) Unwavering objective of Lao Dong Politburo: political control over all of Vietnam.
- (b) Negative corollary: prevent evolution of Viet state structure -- under Communist control.
- (c) It was to accomplish this that insurgency started in 1st place.

II. Phases of development:

- (a) Subversion: '57 - '64
- (b) National liberation war: '59 - '64
- (c) NVN commitment: '64 - '65 (coup de grace)
- (d) Response to US involvement: '65 - '67
- (e) We now in a new phase

III. Current activity outgrowth of strategic discussion going on since last spring (Truong Son/Giap) and, probably, strategic review and decisions made last summer:

- (a) Analysis difficult, confident tone: have mastered special war, coping with limited war. Discounting of 700,000. The tasks (search and destroy, pacification), the contradictions (US, US/GVN, GVN/people).
- (b) On other hand: major trends adverse
 - (1) dearth of tactical success (loss of strategic initiative)
 - (2) losses
 - (3) shrinkage of population base
 - (4) evolution of state structure
- (c) Decision made to increase asset commitment (and, unavoidably, risk) to achieve decisive results in '68:

- (1) reverse trends

(2) collapse GVN militarily and civilly, thus

(3) destroy political basis for US presence

(4) crack US will

(d) Many factors entered in, but probably main ones were:

(1) GVN still frail

(2) US political climate increasingly adverse, our reluctance to commit troops

IV. Strategy implemented during "winter-spring" offensive:

(a) Initial phase devoted to dispersing US forces (Loc Ninh, Dak To, I Corps) and preparing for urban assault.

(b) Second phase kicked off with "Tet offensive" coordinated attacks on more than 100 targets.

V. Results of Tet offensive:

(a) True net balance hard to draw

(b) Maximum objectives failed

(c) Casualties, (over 71,000): qualitative and quantitative

(d) Wrong to think in terms of completed action

VI. Present Enemy objectives:

(a) Burr at ARVN morale and capability, if possible induce surrender or defection

(b) Burr at GVN civil capacity

(c) Compound GVN administrative problems

(d) Recruit and organize in countryside

(e) Erode (shatter) Viet confidence in GVN

(f) Erode US will to continue struggle

VII. Present security situation:

- (a) Enemy ringing most population centers
- (b) Enemy taking advantage of GVN absence from countryside
- (c) Enemy political exploitation (forcing allied destruction of pacified hamlets)
- (d) Economic strangulation

VIII. Enemy problems:

- (a) Excessive propaganda claims and lack of initial political or military success
- (b) Forces over-extended and logistics strained. Stockpiles and stores destroyed
- (c) Qualitative losses
- (d) Morale problems on re-assault
- (e) Command and control problems
- (f) Loss of advantages such as surprise

IX. Enemy intentions -- maintain pressure almost certainly with some additional major attacks:

- (a) I Corps pressure and re-investiture of Hue, Quang Tri.
 - (1) NVN movement-urgency (2 divisions)
 - (2) force repositioning
- (b) Harassment
- (c) At least some provincial towns: Banmethout, Kontum

X. Negotiations: put and call.

XI. The outlook:

- (a) Next three months likely to be decisive

- (b) US contribution will be primarily one of projected attitude
- (c) Primary burden of coping with enemy's thrust must perforce fall on GVN and its response will be prime determinant of struggle's eventual outcome

25 Mar 68

INFILTRATION

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| November '67 | 3,400 |
| December '67 | 2,200 |
| January '68 | 19,400 a) - + 4-5,000 |
| February '68 | est. 3,000 b) - 4,000 |
| March '68 | est. 7,000 b) |
| April '68 | 8,000 b) |

a) CIA would carry this as December infiltration; in addition we estimate an additional 4-5,000 for January.

b) CIA estimates; March and April are minimum figures, especially April.

56
194
250
4
8
371

STAT

103
21
22

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